benefits to a larger cross section of buyers. Interested buyers under 'LSS' have been categorised as under :

1. Actual users.
2. Mini Traders.
3. Wholesale Traders.
4. General.

First preference in order booking and despatches under Liberalised Sale Scheme is being given to actual users who can draw coal for their own use in addition to the normal supplies being received by them against sponsorships/linkages. Second preference is given to the Mini Traders registered with coal companies. Mini Traders would be supplied coal upto 100 tonnes per month subject to availability after meeting the orders booked by actual users. Third preference is given to the Wholesale Traders appointed by coal companies subject to availability after meeting orders booked by first two categories. The remaining quantity if available, is allocated to other interested buyers.

Open cast and under ground mining in the country

1240. SHRI PARMESHWAR KUMAR AGARWALLA : Will the Minister of COAL be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that after nation alisation, the country has become more and more dependent on open cast mining ;

(b) whether it is also a fact that after another 15 years, the production from the open cost mining would down ;

fa) if so, what action Government propose to take to meet the challenge ;

(d) whether it is not a fact that in such an eventuality, the country have to depend on the production of coal from under ground mining only ;

(e) if so, what steps are being taken for augmentation of larger production from underground mining ;

(f) whether Government propose to give emphasis on under ground mining from now and hereafter ; and

(g) if not, what are the reasons therefor ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COAL (SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA): (a) to (g) The rapid growth in coal production from opencast mining after nationalisation of coal mines was mainly to meet the rising demand of various coal consuming sectors particularly the power sector. Production of coal from opencast mines is not likely to come down in another 15 years. In future also the coal production in the countary will continue to come from opencast as well as underground mines. The planning process in respect of coal development projects both underground and opencast is a continuous one. The choice of method of mining, whether opencast or underground, is generally dependent on factors like nature and geometry of coal deposit, geomining conditions and techno-ecnomic and environmental considerations. However, in order to increase production or coal particularly of superior grades greater stress is being laid on faster development of underground mines.

Fires in Coalfield of Bihar

1241. SHRI PARMESHWAR KUMAR AGARWALLA : Will the Minister of COAL be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that out of 70 fires identified in Jharia Coalfield of Bihar, 5 fires have completely been extinguished;

(b) if so, what are the names of those fires and when these fires started;

(c) what methods have been used to extinguishing each of these fires ; and

(d) how much money has been spent on extinguishing of each of these fires since their fired occurrence and till final extinction year-wise ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COAL (SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. As a result of efforts made by the coal company, 5 out of 70 fires identified in Jharia Coalfield of Bihar have been completely extinguished,

Details of these fires are given below:

Location	Reported year of start of fire
Nudkhurkee . . .	1952
Jogidih	1965
Kooridih . . .	1967
East Katras . . .	1951
West Mudidih . .	1957

(c) Since these fires were small and located in shallow outcrop regions of coal seams, these were dealt with by quenching with water, digging out followed by quenching with water and loading off the materials, isolation by trench cutting and blanketing with earth and matti to cut out supply of air.

(d) Bharat Coking Coal Limited (BCCL) have informed that no separate account of expenditure incurred on these fires was maintained. However, the total expenditure incurred to deal with the Jharia Coalfield fires is about Rs. 73 crores.

Coal production during the current financial year

1242. SHRI SURESH PACHOURI: Will the Minister of COAL be pleased to state :

(a) whether during the first five months of the current financial year, there was an increase in coal production ;

(b) if so, what was the total production of coal during this period and to what extent it was more in comparision with the corresponding period of last year;

(c) what is the total target of coal production set for current financial year;

(d) whether in view of this, Government have decided not to allow import of coal by various States ; and

(e) if so, what efforts are being made by Government to improve coal production in the country ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COAL (SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA): (a) and (b) Coal production in the country during the first five months of current financial year and corresponding period of last year was as under :—

(million tonnes\

Period	Coal Production	Percentage increase
April—August, 1992 .	80.46	
April– August, 1993 (Provisional) . .	85.82	6.67

(c) The All India target of coal production for 1993-94 has been fixed at 249.24 million tonnes (including 4.00 million tonnes exposed coal).

(d) Coal has been placed under Open General Licence (OGL) and as such there is no need for any licence/permission from the Government of India for its import.

(e) Steps taken to augment coal pro duction, inter-alia, include opening of new mines, modernisation of existing mines, application of new technologies to optimise production and ensuring timely availability of inputs and infrastructural facilities.

Piparwar Open Cast coal Project

1243. SHRI KAMAL MORARKA : Will the Minister of COAL be pleased to state :

(a) what is the present stage of Piparwar Open Cast coal project;

(b) by when the project is expected to be completed;

(c) what is the total sanctioned outlay of ;he project;

(d) whether Government propose to introduce the similar modern technology in other coal mines; and

(e) if so, by when?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COAL (SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA): (a) to (c) Implementation of Integerated Mine-cum-Beneficiafion Project of Central Coalfields Limited (CCL) is progressing as per schedule and the project is expected to be completed by June,